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SUBJECT: KASSALA STATE- HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION AND CONCERNS

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SUMMARY

¶11. (U) SUMMARY: Between August 3 and 5, USAID staff visited Kassala State in eastern Sudan. During the trip, the USAID team delivered mosquito nets requested by a local teaching hospital, and met with local implementing partners and UN agencies to discuss aspects of the humanitarian situation in the state. The team examined issues including flood preparedness, food security, and overall humanitarian conditions, and discussed future options and contingency plans with humanitarian workers in Kassala. END SUMMARY.

USAID DONATES BED NETS TO KASSALA TEACHING HOSPITAL

¶12. (U) On August 3, USAID delivered 200 mosquito nets to Kassala Teaching Hospital. The hospital administration, including the hospital's managing director, medical director, registrar, and senior surgeon accepted the donation and thanked the U.S. delegation for supporting the hospital's staff and its patients. The Kassala Teaching Hospital was built in 1907 and serves the rural population throughout Kassala State. During his visit to Kassala State in May, U.S. Charg d'Affaires Alberto M. Fernandez visited the teaching hospital. The hospital administration asked for U.S. assistance to procure bed nets for inpatients. The Charg requested USAID assistance with procuring and delivering the mosquito nets to the hospital.

¶13. (SBU) According to hospital officials, the century-old facility suffers from problems that impact the hospital's ability to provide adequate health services. The most pressing issues include a poor drainage system, poor electricity network and supply, and the need to rehabilitate the surgery theater and children's ward. According to the hospital's managing director, although the hospital serves

the rural population of Kassala State, the humanitarian assistance funding that is provided to the rural population does not include the hospital. The Kassala State Ministry of Health spends approximately 90,000 USD on the hospital's monthly operation.

FLOOD PREPAREDNESS

¶4. (U) The UNMIS Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) organized a meeting for the sector lead agencies of the flood preparedness taskforce to update USAID on flood response plans. The RCO, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Mine Action Organization (UNMAO), UN World Food Program (WFP), UN Mission in Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Unit (UNMIS DDR), and Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) attended the meeting. Currently, the group has established a flood preparedness task force and conducted several meetings with government counterparts, revised the contingency plan, and is building capacity to assist up to 15,000 households during potential floods. To date, the committee has pre-positioned materials and earmarked resources for flood response, although members reported a gap between supplies that are required and those readily available. In addition, the UN Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC) has provided training for NGO staff on non-food items (NFI) distribution including assessment, monitoring, and reporting in order to enhance capacities and create a state of readiness on the human resource side.

¶5. (U) Flood committee members argued that the situation in Kassala State should continue to be treated as an emergency despite the fact that Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) has been signed and is currently holding. According to the members, additional emergency issues including frequent floods, possible drought, frequent outbreak of diseases, high rates of malnutrition and mortality for

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children under five years of age, poor access to basic services, and the presence of vulnerable groups are cause for maintaining this emergency status. Flood committee members appealed to donors to consider such indicators when making assessments and decisions.

FOOD SECURITY CONCERNS IN KASSALA

¶6. (U) The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that the Kassala State Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and Ministry of Animal Resource and Fishery (MoARF) organized a meeting with FAO and other NGOs in agriculture and livelihood sector and established a drought preparedness taskforce. According to MoA field reports, the delayed rainy season, increased cereal and animal feed prices, high rates of animal mortality, and sharp decline of livestock prices in the local markets are all worrisome indicators of increasing food insecurity. MoA officials warned that Kassala is heading towards a drought if the rainy season and rainfall pattern continue to be slow and absent for two more weeks, the remainder of the typical planting season. (NOTE: Since the visit and meeting, updated field reports have indicated that rain has started to fall in Kassala. END NOTE).

¶7. (U) According to FAO, the price of a 50 kg bag of sorghum has increased from 30 SDG during summer 2007 to 118 SDG in summer 2008. Sorghum is the main staple in Kassala State and 30 percent of the quantities sold go for animal feed. Since July 2008, field reports indicate that locally produced animal feed prices have nearly tripled.

¶8. (U) Recently, MoA released a report indicating that Kassala uses approximately 21,000 MT of cereal for monthly human and animal consumption, and the state is currently experiencing a monthly gap of at least 4,900 MT. MoA recommends that government authorities release stocks from the grain reserve to fill the current gap, offering the grain at a lower price to be affordable to poor households. MoA also urges state officials to ban sorghum exports to neighboring countries. (NOTE: Kassala State has a total of 4 million feddan of cultivable land which is mostly rain-fed; the

irrigated land in the state is estimated to be 10 percent. END NOTE).

¶19. (U) According to a report released by the MoARF, local authorities reported an alarming increase in livestock mortality during July. MoARF officials reported up to 27,000 animals died during June and July, mostly small ruminants (sheep and goats). Kassala State has approximately 4 million livestock heads and 55 percent of the population is pastoralist. As noted above, animal feed prices have increased: a bundle of sorghum straw increased from 0.25 to 1 SDG for dry sorghum and from 0.50 to 3 SDG for green sorghum. The price of 50 kg of locally produced animal feed also increased from 20 to 46 SDG.

ADDITIONAL HUMANITARIAN ISSUES IN KASSALA

¶10. (U) As of December 2007, UNMIS DDR had completed the disarmament and demobilization of 1,700 ex-combatants in Kassala. The UN Development Program (UNDP) has commenced the re-integration phase with counseling for ex-combatants and plans to be fully operational within two months. In addition, UNICEF is helping 300 ex-child soldiers become re-integrated. Depending on resource availability, UNMIS DDR is also considering assisting 700 additional ex-combatants from the Eastern Front and 1,200 SAF soldiers.

¶11. (U) During August, FAO plans to conduct an agriculture and livestock assessment in Kassala State, targeting areas affected by flooding in previous years and areas occupied by vulnerable groups. The assessment will be part of a national assessment project for

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northern Sudan and non-Darfur that is expected to inform FAO's revised food security strategy and national appeal.

¶12. (U) UNMAO reported that operations to clear Kassala roads for development purposes have not yet commenced. UNMAO is still operating under an emergency phase and facing a severe funding shortage. During the last week of July, rural Kassala experienced two incidents involving unexploded ordnance. According to the March 2008 mine impact survey, Kassala has 27.3 million square mine-infested meters.

¶13. (U) In Kassala State, WFP continues to provide emergency programming, including a year-old school feeding program that targets one section of Hamesh Koreb. In addition, WFP plans to partner with Samaritan's Purse (SP) to support a tuberculosis program in Hamesh Koreb, as well as to partner with German Agro-Action (GAA) for a Food for Work (FFW) program to support dam construction in the area. Partnering with the Sudanese Red Crescent Society, WFP and GAA are also planning supplementary feeding programs for children under five years of age, as well as pregnant and lactating mothers.

¶14. (U) SP opened an office in Kassala in September 2007 to reach and assist populations in Hamesh Koreb. To date, SP supports food assistance, health, agriculture activities, and water, sanitation, and hygiene programs. According to SP staff, the 32 communities most affected by the conflict are now divided between Hamesh Koreb (14) and nearby Telkouk (18). Currently, SP is working on access procedures to be able to extend assistance to Telkouk locality, and the organization plans to use 175,000 USD from the Common Humanitarian Fund in addition to its own funding to assist the Telkouk population.

¶15. (U) German Agro-Action (GAA) has been located in Hamesh Koreb since 2007 and began implementing programs in March 2008. According to GAA staff, access in the area open, and authorities respond positively to GAA requests for access to the enclaves. To date, GAA has constructed 20 dams in Hamesh Koreb area for flood protection and water harvesting and plans to construct 15 additional dams in Hamesh Koreb, as well as 30 dams in both Telkouk and Kassala localities. GAA works with a private contractor in order to implement construction.

¶16. (U) GAA works with FAO to assist 2,000 farmers in Hamesh Koreb with seeds and tools and train 24 agriculture extension workers with training of trainers courses. GAA also plans to engage with WFP to establish 800 gabions to prevent soil erosion and support the dams throughout Hamesh Koreb locality. GAA has received approximately 1 million EUROS from the European Commission to support GAA work in the food security, agriculture, and forestry for the next three years.

COMMENT

¶17. (U) USAID will continue to closely monitor Kassala State and Red Sea State for potential floods, droughts, and increased food insecurity and resulting humanitarian consequences. Barring unfavorable conditions or serious floods in both states, USAID will conduct a follow-up visit to both areas to assess the situation and respond appropriately to humanitarian conditions.

FERNANDEZ